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CENTENARY OF CARLYLE.

SKETCH OF THE GREAT SCOTTISH PHILOSOPHER'S CAREER.

Paper Read Before the Honolulu Scottish Thistle Club on St. Andrew's Eve by Thomas Black.

Thomas Carlyle says, 'Subtlety may deceive a man, Integrity never."

In looking over the columns of the Weekly Scotsman of September the 14th I chanced on a notice of the Centenary of the birth of Thomas Carlyle. It ran thus: "It is nearly fifteen years since the death of Thomas Carlyle and the 4th of December next is the anniversary of his birth. It has occurred to some that the event should receive a special recognition in the metropolis of his native land," and so on, but it also occurred to the reader that the event was very highly worthy of recognition outside said metropolis. So I resolved at the next meeting of the Scottish Thistle Club, to bring the matter before them, when it was unanimously agreed that a paper should be read in honor of the event. Carlyle, the subject of our paper this evening, was born at Ecclefechan, on the 4th of December, one hundred years ago. He was the eldest son of James Carlyle, by his second marriage to Margaret Aitken. After Thomas came eight others, three sons and five daughters. The family was prosperous, as Ecclefechan working life understood prosperity. The Carlyle family during childhood ran around barefooted, but were at all times very cleanly clothed, and the main part of their sustenance seems to have consisted of oatmeal, milk, and potatoes. When Carlyle was five, his father taught him arithmetic, and sent him to the village school, but at an earlier age than that his mother taught him to read. We are told the Carlyles had violent tempers and our subject was no exception. His half-brother John lived with his grandparents, but occasionally visited his parents. One of Carlyle's earliest recollections was that of throwing a little stool at his brother, and breaking a leg of it, and it was at this early age, Carlyle informs us, that he felt for the first time the pangs of loss and remorse. Of his father, Carlyle writes, "I never met a more remarkable man in my journey through life, sterling sincerity in thought, word and deed, most quiet, but capable of blazing into whirlwinds when needful, humor of a most grim Scandinavian type he occasionally had wit rarely or never—too serious for wit." His mother was a severe Calvinist and watched affectionately over her children's spiritual welfare, and especially over Thomas her firstborn. "She was a woman," says Carlyle, "of to me the fairest descent, that of the pious, the just and the wise. No man [illegible] any day or any man can have had better parents." With such parents and amidst the honest thrift and frugality of simple Scottish life, Carlyle struggled through his early boyhood and in his tenth year was placed at school in Annan by his father, his first step into a higher life.

When the time arrived to settle his career, some of the Ecclefechan wiseacres denounced educating one child more than another, and said that educating a boy had a tendency to cause him to despise his less informed parents, but it was decided in spite of all the uncalled for opinions of the wiseacres that to Edinburgh Tam should go. There was nothing luxurious in Scotish college life in those days, not indeed in many instances now. As James Anthony Froude remarks, 'Education is a passion in Scotland,' and Professor Blackie says, "The Scotchman is a readable animal," and I am certain there is no country has produced greater men in all branches, through greater struggles and sterner endurance and through a firm battling with honest poverty than our own beloved Scotia. It makes me feel good to apostrophize on Scotland. Students in many instances well knew the self-denial needed by parents to bring them through college, and they went with a firm intention of making the most of the opportunity, for at that period, as well as at present, students had often to remain only part of the year at their classes, and during the other months teach or work in order that the slender means at their disposal might be augmented. In those days many advantages were quite out of reach that the poor student of today possesses. Their fare was simpler and doubtless more wholesome, very humble lodgings and economical friends suited their tastes. Their very poverty was a safeguard from extravagant amusements, and their hardy Scotch natures and constitutions enabled them at the end of the term to set out on foot to travel the "lang Scots miles" between them and the roof tree. This was the life Carlyle now entered on. Edinburgh was about one hundred miles from Ecclefechan and he was to go there on foot under the protection of another lad who had been at college already. They walked at the rate of twenty miles a day and after arriving and securing a lodging and dinner they went out to view the city. Of course it was all new to Carlyle and left a lasting impression on him. His parents' earnest desire, as was common amongst the Scottish peasantry, was to fit him for the ministry, but he already felt himself most unsuited for it. During Carlyle's college career we are informed he made great progress in mathematics. He only tried once for prizes, and although superior to his classmates the noise prevented him from distinguishing himself. It seems he always felt his best thoughts come to him when alone. After finishing his college career he found pupils, but teaching seems to have been distasteful to him, and it was only that the small income he derived from teaching relieved his father of some of his expenses, and also that being in Annan brought him near his family. His father, who was a mason by trade, had removed from Ecclefechan to a farm, and it was at the farm Carlyle first studied German, a study that was to benefit him greatly in the years to come. The Mainhill house was small, consisting of three rooms, the site was bleak, treeless, and swept by winds, but it seems the view obtained relieved it from utter dreariness. On this solitary farm the Carlyles with their eight children lived, four coming to them for holidays, and the father and other sons farming, and from all we can learn making a hard-earned living out of all their labor. They seem everyone of them to have been a family of more than average intelligence. The mother and daughters took during the house work and attending to the cows and poultry. But indeed we have many instances in Scotland, where as Burns says:

"Buirdly chiels and clever hizzies
Are bred in sic a way as this is."

Carlyle finally abandoned the idea of the ministry and, after two years, school-teaching also. He removed to Edinburgh with the idea of studying law. The family again rendered whatever assistance they could, and with the money derived from pupils and the occasional employment given him by Dr. Brewster (afterwards Sir David Brewster) on his Encyclopædia, he was enabled to earn during the session £2 per week. At this period Carlyle was attacked with dyspepsia, to which he was a martyr during his entire life and which he likened to a 'rat gnawing at his stomach.' The pain made him furious and increased his natural irritability. If time would afford me the opportunity I might tell how all the while he was making himself acquainted with German literature, writing small articles, how he was filled with thoughts struggling for expression, and how finally he abandoned law, and we find him appointed tutor to the Buller family at a salary of £200 per annum. I must now, however, bring before you the woman who was afterwards to become Carlyle's wife. Tradition traced the lineage of Jane Welsh to John Knox and William Wallace, while she was connected to parents and relatives of striking quality. Her grandfather's account to her of their race was "several blackguards among them, but not one blockhead that I ever heard of." Jane Baillie Welsh was an only child, born in 1801. She was beautiful, but more than personal beauty, she possessed intellectual beauty. She was an adored child with luxury and comfort at command. Her family was a prominent and leading one at Haddington. She was highly educated, learning music, drawing and modern languages, and with a thirst for knowledge in general. Her mother wrote poetry of a sweet and lyrical kind and Jane inherited the gift, but her own productions, we are told, touched intellectual chords besides. At the age of eighteen she lost her father, her first great grief, for she was passionately attached to him. He was a doctor and in his will left all his property to Jane except an annuity to her mother. She was thus left young, beautiful, talented and an heiress. It was her ambition to become an authoress, and her tutor, Edward Irving, not having time at his disposal to assist her to any extent, thought of his friend Carlyle, and an introduction was the result. At this time the friendship on her part was only of a literary nature. In reading the letters and life of the two, one can easily see that she loved Irving, and it was purely admiration, and a firm conviction that Carlyle would ultimately become famous that drew her to him. Much has been said about the unhappiness of the Carlyles, but I believe the following paragraph which I quote explains as nearly as possible the reason of unhappiness, if unhappiness there really was. It occurs in a recent review of T. P. O'Connor's work entitled "Some Old Love Stories," and is as follows: "Undoubtedly the study of Carlyle and his wife Jane, and not the least striking part of the Carlyle love story is the courtship which took place before marriage, when Jane Welsh was drawn to her future husband by a feeling of gratified pride that he should be drawn to her. At this time she could say of him, only his tongue should be at liberty, his other members were most fantastically awkward." Mr. O'Connor says: "I have read and re-read the letters which passed between the two at this period; they have the fascination which every authentic human document in a story of tragic marriage must always exercise. In addition, these letters are pictures of two intensely interesting complex, gifted, and historic beings: and they are written with extraordinary literary skill. It would be wrong to describe them as love letters, for alas the two people who wrote them were not in love with each other; but, outside the immortal works of fiction, I don't know any correspondence which conveys so intense a sense of the currents and eddies of feeling, by which men and women are tossed and mocked and undone." In the letters of Mr. Carlyle, too, Mr. O'Connor finds the clue to the unhappy married life of the ill-assorted couple: "Almost a whole library has been written to find the key to the sad mystery of Carlyle and Mrs. Carlyle's unhappiness. To me it seems that all this speculation is far-fetched when we have in these letters the entire, complete and unmistakable key to the heart of the mystery. It is quite true there are natures unimaginative, robust and placid, to whom passionate love is no essential of marriage, but it is a law of nature with those who are imaginative and ardent and indeed with the vast mass of mankind—that marriage is only tolerable when it is entered by people who are drawn to each other, by the overwhelming force of that mental, moral and above all physical attraction, one to the other, which we summarise in the word Love." There, in Mr. O'Conner's opinion and doubtless he is perfectly right, we have the secret of the long unhappiness which drags through the volumes which tell the sad story of the Carlyles. Having given a brief outline of Carlyle's life, and just before bringing any of his works before you, I am reminded of an incident that happened with Carlyle and a young student. The young student brought an essay to Carlyle for reviewing, and Carlyle after reading it and being asked his opinion told the essayist to read, read, read, read, for the next fifteen years, then write, and if Carlyle were alive and read this paper he might tell me to go and read, read, read for the next thirty years, then write, for you may remember in his Sartor Resartus he says that it were a real increase to human happiness could all young men from the age of nineteen be covered under barrels and there left to follow their lawful studies and callings till they emerged sadder and wiser at the age of twenty five. Such gawks are they and foolish peacocks." But of course you all know I have passed the detestable age, and if any of the failings peculiar to those years still remain, I hope all present will bear with me in my humble attempt to pay the highest tribute I can to my deceased venerable countryman, Thomas Carlyle, and in my attempt, I feel as Byron says:

"What I can ne'er express,
Yet cannot all conceal."

Few of Carlyle's readers need to be reminded that the subject is no easy one. Carlyle's writings beyond doubt are of wonderful significance and will amply repay very careful study by the most attentive readers. I do not here propose to enter comparisons of Carlyle's teachings with those of former philosophers. I will leave that seriously to an older and abler head. To do otherwise would be to render a paper rather colossal for our requirements here this evening. As essayist, moralist, historian and biographer Carlyle has had few equals. I will make brief mention here of one or two of his essays. His essay on Burns is considered one of the finest ever written. Carlyle shows us clearly that no outside help would have assisted Burns—"counsel, which seldom profits anyone he did not need, seldom is a life morally wrecked but the grand cause lies in some internal mal-arrangement." But it is clearly pointed out towards the close of his essay that the gentry and nobility that sought Burns so much had a good deal to do with his weakness. We cannot but notice a similarity in the opinions of Burns and Carlyle in some things. Both are sternly sarcastic on empty ceremonies and pomps, and both revere and honor humble human worth and integrity. As Carlyle puts it, to quote again from Sartor Resartus, although I will abbreviate it somewhat: "Two men I honor and no third first, the toilworn craftsman, that with earth-made implements conquers the earth and makes her man's. Venerable to me is the hard hand, crooked, coarse, wherein notwithstanding lies a [illegible] virtue, indefeasibly royal, as of the sceptre of this planet. Venerable too is the rugged face, all weather tanned, besoiled, with its rude intelligence, it is the face of a man living manlike." "A second man I honor and still more highly, him who is sent to bring for the spirituality indispensable, not daily bread but the bread of life. These two in all their degrees I honor, all else is chaff and dust, which let the wind blow whither it listeth. Unspeakably touching it is, however, when I find both dignities united, and he that must toil upwardly for the lowest of man's wants is also toiling inwardly for the highest. Such a one will take thee back to Nazareth itself."

His essay on "History" is a splendid treatise. In it Carlyle shows us the guiding hand of the Invisible, as he says in it: "Whose path is in the great deep of time, whom History reveals, but only all History and in eternity will clearly reveal." I have chosen also to make mention out of his "Heroes and Hero Worship" of our Scottish Reformer, John Knox, as being of special interest to us as Scotchmen. In it he shows how the Puritanism of Knox and Scotland became that of England, of New England, and of the world, but what vexes me is this, that with the indisputable fact of a Knox and a Scotch Reformation, it needed after all Oliver Cromwell with his Ironsides to come and teach Scotsmen the spirit of Puritanism, Scotsmen holding too closely to the letter. Scotland and England if united at that time might have succeeded in making the whole world Puritan. However, I would refer you to Carlyle's "Oliver Cromwell's Letters and Speeches," where you will get some splendid information as regards the struggles there existing, and where you will find a very clear insight into the life of the Protector. His "French Revolution" is considered by most critics as the finest treatment of that terrible event ever written. It must have been a work of almost terrible importance to Carlyle himself, for he informs us, after it was written, he gave the manuscript to a friend to review, and it seems the reviewer left it lying on the table at night, and when the servant was looking for paper to light the fire in the morning, she chanced on the manuscript, and took it to light the fire with. With Carlyle's temper we can imagine how it affected him. He seems to have given up the idea of renewing the task, but later on he tells us how he was sitting at the window looking out on a bricklayer, who was laying brick after brick, and how he noticed that day after day the wall began to rise, when it seems to have given him the impetus to try again, with the result that we all know. I have no further time to enter into details of his "Past and Present," his "Essays Miscellaneous and Critical," or into his "German Investigations;" many of you will have read the most of his works and some only a few, and if I have succeeded in making those who have read a few wish to read more, and those who have not read any of his works wish to begin, I shall think my little effort has been worth attempting. Carlyle had faults, who has not? but surely we have a right to forget the faults of genius. We see the many obstacles he overcame, how he struggled through comparative poverty, to the height of fame, and has left a name to be handed down for generations. His troubles no doubt made him irritable and unreasonable, often in trifles, but his heart was generous and sympathetic, as we can see. Many times in his poorest days, working hard and scant of money, we find him scraping together what will send a present to his mother, to whom he was devoted. While struggling through his own

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